GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2330
ANSWERED ON:13.03.2001
WASTELAND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
BHAVNA DEVRAJ CHIKHALIA

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the year in which the Wasteland Development Department was created;

(b) whether the Principal Director of Audit Economic and Service Ministries, New Delhi has carried out the audit;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the period upto which the audit has been carried out;

(e) the details of audit report, State-wise, especially for Gujarat during each of the last three years;

(f) whether any objections have been raised against the organisations funded for the development of wasteland;
(g) if so, the details thereof; and
(h) the action taken by the Government in the matter?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (Prof. Rita Verma)

(a) Department of Wastelands Development (DoWD) was set-up under the Ministry of Rural Development in 1992. Subsequently in April,1999, the DoWD wasre-named as the Department of Land Resources (DoLR) and all land based programmes of the Ministry were brought within its purview.

(b), (c) & (d) : Yes, Sir. The Principal Director of Audit Economic and Service Ministries, New Delhi had carried out audit with respect to the following programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development.

(i) Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP)

(ii) Support to NGOs/VAs Scheme (Grant-in-Aid)

(iii) Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP)

1. Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) : The audit was conducted during December, 1997 to April, 1998. The audit details have been incorporated in Para No. 10.4 of Report No. 4 of 2000 (Civil) and Para No. 15 of Report No. 2 of 2000 (civil).

2. Support to NGOs/VAs Scheme (GIA): The audit was conducted for the period 1997-98 and the audit details have been incorporated in audit Para 15 of Report No. 2 of 2000 (civil).

3. Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP):The audit was conducted during April 1998 to June, 1998 and audit details have been incorporated in Para 3 of Report No. 3 of 1999 (civil).

(e) The details of audit report during each of the last three years, Programme/Scheme-wise are given as under:

I. Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) :

(i) Rajasthan : The commencement of work of Baleshwar Wastelands Development Project(BWDP) in Sikar district without obtaining sanction of Government of India (GOI) led to un-authorized expenditure of Rs. 125.26 lakhs and blocking of un-spent balance of Rs. 14.74 lakhs (till it was refunded).

(ii) Maharashtra :

(a) Pre-sanction checks for IWDP, Nasik were lax and Agro Forestry Federation (AFF), Nasik was not directly involved in wastelands

development.

(b) Pre-condition of involvement of local community and sharing of usufruct by local people were negated due to planting on the Army land.

II. Support to NGOs/VAs Scheme (Grant-in-Aid)

(i) Maharashtra :

(a) Pre-sanction checks were lax in sanctioning projects to Army Foundation for Environment Conservation (AFEC), New Delhi and Agro-Forestry Federation (AFF), Nasik was not directly involved in wastelands development.

(ii) Haryana : AFEC had poor survival rate and it ranged from 5 to 15%.

III. Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP)The audit report has highlighted certain discrepancies in the implementation of Programme in Programme States. These are mainly as under:

(a) Increase in drought prone areas even after implementation of the programme for almost two decades.

(b) Overlapping of objectives of multiplicity of Rural Development Programmes, absence of accountability, lack of initiative at the Central level to dovetail identical programmes etc.

(c) Complete development and saturation of watershed were not achieved; evaluation was not conducted to ascertain the impact of the programme.

(d) Scientific techniques like aerial photography and remote sensing were not used.

(e) Efficiency of conservation of water and water resources was not measured.

(f) Crop demonstrations were not undertaken.

(g) Funds were diverted for activities/schemes beyond the scope of the programme.

(h) Survival rate of plantations was low.

(i) Inventory of assets created under the programme was not maintained; and

(j) Unit cost of land development varied widely from State to State.

In case of GUJARAT, it was mainly pointed out that:

(a) In identified districts, funds were diverted to other schemes/activities not connected with the programme, and

(b) Funds were parked in Personal Ledger Account (PLA) with Treasury.

(f), (g) & (h) : Organisations where objections have been raised are Agro-Forestry Federation (AFF), Nasik and Army Foundatrion for Environment Conservation (AFEC). It was observed by the audit that AFEC had no past experience and AFF was not directly involvec in wastelands development.

Unspent balance of Rs. 14.74 lakhs along with accrued interest has since been recovered from District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Sikar. An evaluator has been appointed to ascertain the expenditure made in accordance with guidelines. For closer scrutiny of experience and expertise of Non-governmental Organisations, all the on-going projects were transferred to Council For Advancement of People`s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), New Delhi. All new proposals for sanction of projects to NGOs/VAs are now being considered by CAPART. Necessary information/clarifications have been furnished to the Audit.

The audit observations have also been communicated to the concerned State Governments/organisations for corrective measures.